

TEXTBOOK OF VIROLOGY FOR STUDENTS AND PRACTITIONERS OF MEDICINE. By A. J. Rhodes, M.D., F.R.C.P.(Edin.), F.R.S.C., and C. E. Van Rooyen, M.D., D.Sc.(Edin.), M.R.C.P.(Lond.), F.R.C.P. Third Edition. (Pp. xl + 692; figs. 81. 80s.) London: Baillière, Tindall & Cox, 1958.

THE third edition of this textbook, first published in 1939, has been considerably revised and brought up to date. Virology is advancing so rapidly that no comprehensive work covering the whole field can be fully up to date at the time of its completion, but the authors have managed to be so nearly so that the reviewer feels that they must have revised and amplified their text up to the last minute. One of the authors' purposes is to present an account of the essential features of the virus and rickettsial diseases of man in a form suitable for undergraduate students. No medical student in this country could be expected to master the immense amount of detailed information on the characteristics of the various viruses and of the many laboratory techniques involved in diagnosis. For the postgraduate student it is excellent, but the undergraduate will have to read it selectively. It is, however, the best book of its type which the reviewer has read.

Following a section on the fundamental characteristics of virus infections of man and animals, the viruses of human disease are grouped according to the bodily system affected. There are sections on virus diseases of the skin and of the respiratory system, eye disease, exanthemata, etc., and such sections should be of very great value to specialists who wish to keep abreast of virology in their own fields. The layout of this textbook has much to recommend it to all readers.

In a textbook written for doctors and concerned with human disease it seems to the reviewer unnecessary and perhaps even tantalising to list at the beginning of the book the virus and rickettsial diseases of the various species of animals such as Long Island duck disease and virus enteritis of mink which are neither indexed nor mentioned again in the text.

The reviewer considers that in the first section particularly, but indeed also elsewhere in the book, many illustrations and diagrams have been selected because of availability rather than suitability. Thus nearly two full pages are given over to photographs and a diagram of the Spinco centrifuge. The diagrams of sections of chick embryos are embryological diagrams with excessive detail. The plates of monkey testis cultures, fig. 16, (a) and (b), are very poor, and it seems a pity in 1958 to have reproductions of drawings (fig. 1) of elementary bodies from a book published in 1937. In figs. 12 and 13 the electron microscope photographs have no inset scale such as is present in other plates of the same type. The photograph of the R.C.A. electron microscope again has no scale to indicate its size. The reviewer showed this plate to a student and asked how large he thought the machine was. The student said he thought it would go on top of the bench. The diagrams reproduced from a W.H.O. monograph showing annual attack rates of poliomyelitis extend only to 1953. The diagrams of tissue culture techniques are good, but are not referred to in the text.

The only other general criticism which the reviewer has is a slight lack of balance. For instance, there is no plate to illustrate the technique of the hæmagglutination inhibition test, which would be helpful, and the complement fixation test gets little attention, yet there are two half-pages of diagrams of ultraviolet irradiators which have been used in attempts to inactivate serum hepatitis virus in plasma. Cat scratch fever, a disease of doubtful virus etiology, occupies about the same space as a typical pneumonia.

In spite of these general criticisms there is very little of the text which is not well written and clearly set out. The only serious disagreement the reviewer would have with the authors is the implication (p. 110) that specimens for virus investigation can be shipped in screw-cap bottles on dry ice, for CO₂ may have a deleterious effect on some viruses.

This book is well bound and well printed, and its price seems low considering the number of illustrations it contains. It would serve as a valuable introduction to the postgraduate beginner in virology, a very useful reference book to the non-specialist, and should be readily available to general pathologists and physicians. It is highly recommended. G.D.